

Knowing God as Father

You sum up the whole of the New Testament teaching in a single phrase if you speak of it as a revelation of the Fatherhood of the Holy Creator... If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and his prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well at all...

Father is the Christian name for God.¹

God desires that each one of us knows Him as a loving Father. It seems that every one of us needs to grow in understanding this wonderful reality of His love on a deep heart level. We all know this in our heads, but when it comes to being truly confident in the love that God our Father has towards us personally, we often fall short. As we expect to do the miraculous in His Name in the nations, knowing our Father's love and care is absolutely essential. We must have the firm assurance of His love in ourselves because we are called to spread the good news of the Father's love through Christ to a lost and dying world. What do the people of other religions miss? They miss the reality of knowing the love of God. They believe in numerous gods who cannot love, care and truly help them in their daily lives.

To call God "Father" does not totally sum up the loving attributes of God, but it gives us some idea. Father is not the complete description of His relationship with us, as we are limited by language and human definition. When we call God "Father", we mean that God has the original qualities that we admire when reflected by the best and wisest of all human fathers. I (Debbie) cannot express to you the importance of knowing God personally as a Father during my years on the mission field and as we presently go to the nations. There were so many times I cried out to Him in prayer for help and strength, for guidance and comfort, for faith and encouragement. And He always came through for me as a loving Father would to any son or daughter. I believe that growing in this Father-daughter or Father-son relationship is a key to long-term missionary success. We all need to hold a hand that is bigger and stronger than our own.

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born

under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons. Because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba' Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Galatians 4:4-7

What Being a Child of God Means in Our Life-expression

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (I John 1:12).

Being a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father should make an obvious difference in the way we live. We have special privileges, but also responsibilities. Knowing God intimately as a Father should manifest in every way we live and work. We can point others to the love of the Father because we know Him as Father ourselves. When we go to the nations, we go as a child of the King. We are heir of all that He has. When we face difficulties, we are able to draw upon the strength and wisdom of our loving Father. We know what He is like and, therefore, we can see and experience life in a whole new dimension. Because God is:

- Compassionate and forgiving – then we find Him accepting us even when we fail. In Psalm 103:13-14, we find that our Father has compassion on us just as a father has compassion on his children.

“And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin’” (Exodus 34:6-7).

- Provider – then we can expect His provision. We can trust God to always provide for us. In Matthew 6:26, we see that God even provides for the birds of the air. We are of much greater value than they.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

- Protector – then our hearts can know peace. God is love, and His love never fails in any situation.

"Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (I Corinthians 13:7-8).

- Name-giver – then we can feel a sense of belonging. We are in a spiritual brotherhood and family. God has a special name for us denoting that we belong to Him. To bear God's name is to belong to God, to be His child.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

- Image giver – then we can rejoice in who we are. We are made in God's image. We see this in Genesis 1, Romans 8:2, and I Corinthians 15:49.

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18).

- Guide – then we can have confidence. We can walk in assurance and peace because God is leading the way.

"I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son" (Jeremiah 31:9).

- Comforter and Encourager – then we can take our hurt to Him. What a difference the comfort of God makes in the midst of uncertain times. See II Thessalonians 2:16-17.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

- Proud Father – then we don't need to wonder what He thinks of us. We can know that God delights in us as His child.

"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with

singing” (Zephaniah 3:17).

- Ever-present – then we can communicate with Him anytime. God does not have "latch-key" kids. He longs to be with each one of us always.

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

- Trainer and Disciplinarian – then we can respect Him. The New Testament idea of chastisement doesn't have negative connotations. The idea is more in line with training. The word "paideuo" denotes to train children, with the broad idea of education, instruction and correction (Vines). See Hebrews 12:5–11.

"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Proverbs 3:11–12).

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ" (Galatians 3:26).

Knowing that God is our Father should affect everything we do and say. To call God "Father" means that He displays, in perfection, the qualities of the best fathers. It should affect all that we do for Him on the mission field. The reality is awesome, the possibilities are limitless, and the power of such truth is beyond comprehension. This is why every one of us needs to cultivate this reality within our own heart. None of us has the full picture of what this really means. When we do begin to understand experientially this truth, we will be unstoppable for God's Kingdom purposes. We will be laying hold of our true relationship, with its authority and responsibilities, and drawing from a love from the Father that is unending, unquenchable and always present. We will then walk in the true dignity of a son or daughter who is living in the Kingdom of God, basking in the richness of that love.

Imagine that you are in the family room of your house. God your Father is seated in that room. Where are you seated in relation to Him? Are you in the corner? Are you close or far away on a chair? Are you seated in His lap? Answering these questions may give you a picture of where you are personally in understanding the love of God the Father towards you as a son or daughter. We all are growing more and more in knowing the love of God. Our Father's desire is for us. He longs for us. Let us meditate on these Fatherly traits of God, and pray for the innermost understanding of this reality in our lives. We will need to really know them in the days to come. May our hearts truly grasp the depth of love that God our Father has for each one of us, and may we share this wonder-

ful truth of the Father heart of God to a world that knows very little of love. The nations are waiting to hear.

As with any relationship, the more time we spend with someone, the more we get to know that person. Song of Solomon 7:10 states: 'I am my beloved's and his desire is for me.' The Hebrew word for 'desire' is teshuwqah which means 'stretching out after; a longing'. The Lord loves us so much that He is actually longing to be with us. It is truly amazing that the God who made the universe wants to spend time with each of us personally.²

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Chapter Eight Mentoring in Personal Freedom

¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*

² Deborah Joyner Johnson

³ Robert McGee, *The Search for Significance* (Houston, TX: Rapha Publishing, 1990)

⁴ Robin McMillan, "The Power of the Father's Approval" (Wilkesboro, NC: Morningstar Publications, The Morningstar Journal), 5.

⁵ Ibid., 5.

Chapter Nine Mentoring in Breaking Strongholds